



*l-r: Larry Amagaki, Kazuo Yamane, Sakae Tanigawa, Kenneth Kaneko
La Crosse, Wisconsin, October 1943*

Of Special Missions and POWs

During the 100th's stay in McCoy, two groups of men were selected for entirely different missions. Their objectives, however, were the same – to prepare for the upcoming campaigns in the jungles of the Pacific islands. And where one succeeded brilliantly, the other fell flat on its nose. The first group was comprised of two officers, 24 EM from the 3rd Platoon, Baker Company, and a cook from Headquarters Company. Literally spirited out of McCoy in early November, no one knew what had become of them until they returned in March. By then the 100th was at Shelby. There was nothing classified about the second group, men who were selected for language school training. But where the first returned to its outfit, the men in the MIS were never heard from again till after war's end, the story of their deeds coming to light decades later. Here's one of them.

Language, not the sword

This is an MIS story, specifically about Kazuo Yamane who at the beginning was a member of Baker Company. His is just one of many needed to be told about the role of the Nisei in the Pacific, very little of which has ever appeared in the pages of the *Puka Puka Parade*.

Kazuo's story casts a bit of brightness to the concept that however tedious and plodding a task might be, the work of each of us can make a difference. Another aspect is that whereas most MIS ventures emanate out of the Pacific, his was played out at the Pentagon and, toward the end of the war, in the European theater – target Berlin.

The 100th had settled into its routine at McCoy when, in November, several groups of men, totalling about 80, were pulled out for training as interrogators, interpreters and translators at the MIS language school at Camp Savage, Minnesota.

To his surprise, upon completion of his schooling six months later, Kazuo was sent not to the Pacific but to the Pentagon along with three others.

His first assignment: review a big over-sized book which had already been picked over by the intelligence people in Australia for whatever information they could glean, and forwarded to the Pentagon. It was a roster of all regular and reserve officers in the Japanese army and also gave descriptions and locations of all army units in the homeland, Manchuria, China and elsewhere – nothing spectacular in themselves. But, in correlating the two– the tedious job of identifying the units and matching them to the names of the officers – an order of battle of the Japanese army began to emerge. It took a year to cross-reference and index the information – one set of cards in English and the other in Japanese. They filled several dozen filing cabinets. Out of that effort came the first detailed picture of the structure of the Japanese army. Ironically, the book was in a box found floating among the flotsam and jetsam of the sea and air battles waged around the islands of the Marianas.

Kazuo's next assignment was at nearby Camp Ritchie, Maryland, at the newly created Far Eastern Intelligence Center, where he was directed by his boss to look over a publication which naval intelligence at Pearl had determined as not containing anything of significance. It was but one item in a collection of 15 boxes of documents and he wanted it screened before turning it over for training purposes. Titled, "Imperial Japanese Army Ordinance Inventory," it was like unlocking Pandora's box. Out of the 2" thick book came detailed descriptions not only of all the armaments in the Japanese inventory, but also the locations of all arms, ammunition depots and manufacturing plants in the homeland. Why such a super-secret document was in the field is





Cat Island, Mississippi 1943, L-R: Ray Nosaka, Katsumi Maeda, Pat Tokushima

anyone's guess. Whatever. There it was, staring him in the face. Immediately, all available translators were put to work on the book. Before long, strategic planners laying out the B-29 bombing raids over Japanese cities were including them in their target lists.

And after Japan's surrender, the information enabled occupying forces to proceed directly to the arms caches to secure them. Writes Joseph D. Harrington in his book, "Yankee Samurai" ... "This was the true secret of Japan's being disarmed without incident, and it all could be traced to one quiet Nisei from Hawaii."

Kazuo's last assignment put him on a giant C-54, destination Paris, by way of Newfoundland and Scotland. Besides the crew, there were only five others on that big passenger plane. In Paris, Kazuo was hooked up to Eisenhower's headquarters as the Allied troops surged across the Rhine into Germany. His mission: get into Berlin by any means, infiltrate the Japanese embassy and pick up whatever documents he could find. However, the Russians were already closing in on Berlin and attempts to get Kazuo and his companions into the city were rebuffed; already, Stalin's "iron curtain" was beginning to descend upon the continent. And so ended Kazuo's military service.

His father, Uichi, came to Hawaii in 1896 following Japan's victory in the Sino-Japanese war. The war had bankrupted the country. He came not as a contract laborer but as an independent; not to save and send money home to Yamaguchi but to do something with it here in Hawaii. Farsighted, he settled in Kalihi at the end of the horse-drawn trolley line and opened the U. Yamane Store as a means of fulfilling the needs of the people living and working in the area. He then branched out into real estate. His business connections were legion, and his friends cosmopolitan. This fact probably saved him from being picked up by the FBI for internment following Pearl

Harbor, inasmuch as he was very active in Japanese religious and civic affairs.

As for Kazuo himself, he is the eighth of seven girls and four boys (the first boy after the seven girls). After graduation from McKinley, he spent a number of years in Japan, graduating from Waseda University in 1940. Upon his return to Hawaii, Kazuo was drafted shortly before Pearl Harbor and was in that group recalled to Schofield Barracks to constitute the provisional battalion which subsequently became the 100th. While at the Pentagon, he met Mary Shiyomura. Born in Denver, she was working in D.C. where the two met and married. They have four children. At 75, he still reports for work five days a week at the family corporation, U. Yamane, Ltd., managing the Kalihi and Pearl City shopping centers.

The Cat Island Caper

The battalion was on an all-day hike one day in September when Jim Lovell and Col. Turner were recalled to camp to meet some visiting brass from the Pentagon. Jim was told that he had been picked to head a special project – the training of dogs. Ostensibly, the end purpose of the training was to see whether the dogs would respond to the sight and smell of the Japanese soldier and get them to bite only Japanese, the idea being that dogs so trained would be invaluable in ferreting out the enemy in the jungles of the Pacific. But what started out in deep secrecy ended up as a caper. For when not in training, which was often, the boys were on banker's hours more preoccupied with fishing, eating, drinking, swimming and having a good time.

One cold winter morning, in all secrecy, the men were hustled to another camp and boarded two DC-3s and flown to the New Orleans airport. There, on a field cleared of everything, the whole ringed by MPs, the men walked out of their planes directly into the back end of 2-1/2 ton trucks covered by tarps, transported to a dock, and launched to Ship Island, one of a triad of islands a dozen or so miles off the Mississippi coast. It was to be their base of opera-





German Storm troopers surrender, Italy, July 1944

tions for the next four months. Another island was Rat Island. But the experiments were conducted on one ironically named Cat Island.

Dogs of many breeds were involved in the training to turn them into scout, messenger, trailer, sentry, suicide and attack dogs. The head trainer was an elderly fellow of Swiss descent. For their part, the men would often act as foils, such as hiding in the thick forests with a jar of horse meat to see whether the dogs could find them through the smell of the meat. Then, dogs chained to trees were beaten with knotted burlap bags to work them into a frenzy. The setup included dummy soldiers dressed to look like Japanese. There was the ever-present danger of being bitten so they had to wear face masks and body armor for protection.

"The tests proved absolutely false," says Jim. "Blood and perspiration of our boys did not attract the dogs any more than others. But they enjoyed themselves. It was 16 below in McCoy and these men were in their swimming trunks, fishing and swimming." Unfortunately, all good things have to come to an end. And it was just as well that this one did because any more of the good life and they would have been in no condition to return to soldiering. But really, why did the experiment fall on its nose? Ah, says Yasuo Takata, "The army forgot to feed us *chazuke, koko and takuwan!*"

Of POWs, and a Lesson in Americanism

100th's first POW - Hiroshi Hamada (A)

It was late September. By the end of the 100th's first day of combat, the baptism of fire had exacted its first KIA, then another, and several wounded. As the 100th took up the chase of the retreating enemy, there was more to come: running into mined roads and demolished bridges, walking miles through hills and valleys and into battered villages, crossing the Volturno and fighting its way into S. Angelo d'Alife. Somewhere in these early encounters, Hiroshi Hamada became the first 100th soldier to be captured by the enemy.

When he could not be accounted for after one of the battles, his good friend, Richard Hamasaki, organized a search, checking with the Medics and the others around the company. Nothing turned up. In the absence of a body, he could only hope that his pal had been captured. The confirmation came some time later in a message sent by the Red Cross to his brother in Hawaii that Hiroshi was indeed a POW in Germany. Richard had to wait till the end of the war to hear him tell of his tale, and this is the first written account of that story, as related by Richard. The story is abbreviated by necessity because Hiroshi passed away last December after a long illness and Richard (born on the Big Island, now living in San Francisco) has only his memories to rely on.

Understandably, the Germans were confused when they discovered that their prisoner was a Japanese American. But they did not mistreat him. He spent most of his time doing such menial things as picking up firewood from the forests. Occasionally, he received a CARE package. But how was he captured in the first place?

In the heat of one of the October battles earlier noted – Hiroshi has not been able to pinpoint exactly when or where – he became disoriented as to the direction of the battle. So instead of heading toward his comrades, he stumbled onto enemy lines and was captured. The circumstance is embarrassing, to say the least, but to his credit, he did not try to change or cook up a story to reflect otherwise.

Hiroshi was in the first draft. His father was as proud as anyone, seeing his son in the uniform of his country. Upon the tragedy of Pearl Harbor, he purchased a \$10,000 U. S. Savings Bond as his immediate contribution to the war effort. (The father was proprietor of the Hamada Store and had an exclusive contract with Matson to pick up all goods damaged in shipment at considerably reduced prices, and resell them.)





*Prior to his capture by the Germans, Lt. Takeichi Miyashiro
received a DSC from Gen. Mark Clark*

At McCoy, Hiroshi busted his knee while running through an obstacle course and though not completely healed, he pleaded his case so he could rejoin his buddies who by then were in Shelby. For sure, he was not about to be left behind and out of combat. Fate, however, has a way of intervening in such matters. And so while the 100th continued to fight its way through Italy and France, Hiroshi was reduced to sitting out the war inside a prisoner compound. That could have been a greater ordeal than the trying experiences his comrades endured under the pressures of the battlefields.

And what about the father? Back home (and this part of the story is told by Hiroshi's son, Elroy), Hiroshi's father had been visited by an army officer and a chaplain who informed him that his son had passed away. Saddened and disillusioned, he sought peace of mind and heart in the comfort of a temple priest. Then about a week later, he was again visited by the army representatives who now brought glad tidings – that Hiroshi was alive in a POW camp. They apologized for the previous misinformation. In relief and happiness, he could now look forward to a new day.

Takeichi "Chicken" Miyashiro

Another POW, Takeichi "Chicken" Miyashiro from Kohala was drafted in Hilo a year before Pearl Harbor and became an original member of the 100th. He received a battlefield commission in Anzio, was wounded thrice in battle, and earned several medals including a DSC.

At Biffontaine, Chicken's 2nd Platoon began receiving intense fire from enemy riflemen hidden in the houses on the narrow streets of the town, and from tanks and weapons carriers. In the melee, Chicken was hit on the left hip. But before that, his men had already captured a group of Germans, 28 in all, including some medics. His attitude towards prisoners was to treat them as human beings, never to mistreat them.

Later, in taking the prisoners to the rear, in addition to those guarding them, the Charlie group included five litter cases and some walking wounded – 12 in all. Chicken was also on litter. The prisoners helped to carry them. Along the way they ran into an enemy patrol. Suddenly, the captors became the captured. Even in this turn of events, the Germans continued to carry the Charlie litter cases.

At the German lines, the wounded were sent away by ambulance while the others went on a different path. Chicken went from one hospital to another for treatment, and finally received proper attention from a British doctor who was himself a POW. Then he was sent to a POW camp in Poland. When the Russians overran the country, Chicken was freed. Because he was still on crutches, Chicken was sent to the Black Sea port of Odessa from where he started the long trek home to Hawaii, by way of Egypt, Naples and Miami.

Stanley Akita

Stanley Akita, who was with Chicken at Biffontaine, experienced a different journey as a 100th soldier and a POW.

Born in Honomu, he came to Honolulu after graduation from Hilo High School to seek vocational training as an electrician. Called back home after December 7, Stanley volunteered for the 442nd from the Big Island. He literally kept his fingers crossed in the hope that he'd be selected; his father was a first sergeant in the National Guard and Stanley wanted to make him proud.

While in training with the 442nd at Shelby, Stanley was picked in November '43 to be in the first group of replacements to be sent to the 100th. Having entered combat in September, the 100th was already experiencing a high casualty rate. Assigned to Charlie Company, he eventually found himself in France.

At Biffontaine, Stanley came to develop a high regard for the German soldier as he watched them help carry Charlie Company's wounded, doing so even when the Germans had the upper hand.





German medic P.O.W.



Asian P.O.W.'s: Laborers needed by the German army

In German territory, Stanley continued on to the rear and became part of a larger group of POWs. Whereas Chicken ended far north in Poland, Stanley was herded into a prison camp at Stalag 7A near Landshut, not too far inland from the French border. The large number of prisoners there were Allied POWs from everywhere. And there were even those who were clothed in the striped black-and-white pajamas-looking garb which came to be identified with the concentration camps of the Holocaust.

Stanley's workday often took him into Munich, cleaning up the rubble in the aftermath of the frequent night bombings of the city by the American air force. Food, of course, was meager and lousy – bread that tasted like sawdust and coffee, which reminded him of the unpleasant taste of the Japanese tea called *habucha*. The routine was occasionally relieved by Red Cross packages. Considering the deteriorating position of the Nazis, however, conditions were tolerable.

As for the war itself, Eisenhower's forces had finally crossed the Rhine and were driving into Germany. Then one night, there was the sound of machine guns popping in the nearby woods. By morning, the guards had disappeared. Suddenly, everyone was free again. For Stanley, the path to home was by way of Paris and Boston.

In his first interrogation behind the German lines, Stanley was asked, "How come you're fighting for America?," the inference being that as one of Japanese heritage, he should be fighting for them.

"Because I'm an American," he replied.

Pursuing the question, the officer asked, "What makes you feel like an American?"

"Because I was born in America." Nothing could be more straightforward than that – the fundamental answer to the question of Americanism.

Ben Tamashiro

